

How to Write an Effective 5-Paragraph Essay

1. Reading and Comprehending the Question

Question: What I want most that money can't buy?

First, ask yourself what is my first initial thought or reaction to this question?

Possible answer: I want to be a good parent so I can raise my kids to be successful.

2. Brainstorm

How do I put 3 supporting ideas around this thought? Before you start writing jot down an outline of each topic

Three drawer dresser example



The entire dresser is on the topic you have chosen...your first thought. For example if this is a 15-year old boy's dresser, then you wouldn't expect to find any drawers with girls socks in them.

Make sure that the chest is only filled with your main idea's thoughts and that each drawer (supporting idea) is filled with only the sub-compartment needed for that paragraph (socks, underwear, t-shirts).

Remember don't mix socks with t-shirts. Each drawer needs to focus on only the topic at hand.

Stay focused on each topic. The conclusion is where you connect why all 3 drawers are related. The socks, t-shirts and underwear are all underneath the clothes that this boy wears.

Those last few sentences could be the final thought because it connects all 3 drawers and it leaves a meaningful impression.

Hint: The most common mistake that students make when they begin to write an essay is they just start writing without organizing their thoughts. This will lead to an essay with a main idea but often times it will lead to an essay that seems unorganized.

Test Taking Strategy: If you write a well written Introduction and first body paragraph, the person reading your essay might not even read the rest of your essay. Readers have thousands of essays they have to read and they can tell within the first few paragraphs if you know how to write an essay.

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3. Writing an Outline

Always write an outline to just frame your thoughts before you actually start writing your essay. (5 minutes)

- Main idea (the dresser drawer)
 - Attention getter
 - Thesis statement
 - List your 3 main ideas
- Supporting Idea 1 (first drawer - t-shirts)
 - What 3 facts support your idea number 1. They should be support your idea and not fit into any other drawer but this one.
- Supporting Idea 2 (first drawer - pants)
 - What 3 facts support your idea number 1. They should be support your idea and not fit into any other drawer but this one.
- Supporting Idea 3 (first drawer - socks)
 - What 3 facts support your idea number 1. They should be support your idea and not fit into any other drawer but this one.
- Conclusion - Closing idea/morale of the story
 - Highlight what you wrote and give the reader a closing thought.



Hint: The biggest challenge that writers have is thinking of 3 **unique** supporting ideas.

Each drawer/supporting idea needs to address a different topic. So keep your T-shirts in one drawer and the socks in another.

Dont mix them in the same paragraph.

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4. Putting it All Together

Therefore, the 5 paragraph essay can best be described from a high-level as:

First paragraph

- Introduction • Intro/Attention getter
- Thesis statement
- Introduce the 3 supporting topics or drawers in your chest

Second, Third and Fourth paragraphs (supporting ideas)

- Topic sentence (main idea) that will be the focus of this paragraph.
- At least 3 supporting ideas (keep the drawers separate)
- Conclusion to this paragraph

Fifth paragraph

- Tells the reader what you told them but doesn't it using slightly different words
- Really important to use critical thinking here
- May highlight the overarching idea or concept of the whole essay.
- Finish strong!

